

to have helped us—I'm just going to tell you: They were told it was legal by the Government, and they were told it was necessary by the Government. And here they are getting sued. It would be dangerous—the reason—the danger in all this is that because the private companies are fearful of lawsuits or being besieged by lawsuits, they would be less willing to help in the future.

If your Government has said this is legal and we want your help and then all of a sudden they get sued for billions of dollars, you can imagine how hesitant they'll be with future requests. And yet the threat is ongoing. And that's why we said, failure by the House to act on the Senate bill would create an intelligence gap that is unacceptable.

So I appreciate your interest in the subject. Thank you for giving me and the General a chance to come by, and God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:22 p.m. in Room 350 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to State Attorneys General Lawrence Wasden of Idaho, Patrick C. Lynch of Rhode Island, and Greg Abbott of Texas.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Lieutenant General Raymond T. Odierno

March 3, 2008

General Ray Odierno served for 30 months in Iraq. He's nominated to Vice Chairman [Vice Chief of Staff] * of the Army. And I asked him to come in for several reasons. One, I wanted to thank him. And in thanking the general, I'm really thanking everybody who has worn the uniform and served in this war against the extremists and terrorists. And in thanking the general, I'm also thanking Mrs. Odierno and every wife or every husband whose spouse has been far away from home and is serving.

And in listening to the general, I was listening carefully to make sure that the decisions that had been made were the right decisions and that the progress that's being made is real. I mean, this is a man who was there

when times looked grim and a man who observed firsthand progress that was made as a result of the surge.

He was a straightforward fellow who gave me his candid advice on how best to proceed—not necessarily with troop levels, because that study is going on now, but in making sure that we continue programs such as what's called the CERP money. This is money for our commanders to make—to help these local folks rebuild and reconcile.

And so, general, I want to thank you for your service. And I appreciate the fact that you really snatched defeat out of the jaws of those who are trying to defeat us in Iraq. You were the—you and General Petraeus were a unbelievably strong one-two combination.

And my call and my assurance, sir, is that the gains that you and your teams have made will continue on, because stakes in Iraq are essential for peace, essential for freedom, and essential for the security of this country. I'm honored to be your Commander in Chief.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:10 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Linda Odierno, wife of Lt. Gen. Odierno; and Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq.

Remarks on Presenting Posthumously the Congressional Medal of Honor to Woodrow W. Keeble

March 3, 2008

The President. Welcome. Thanks for coming. Mr. Vice President, Mr. Secretary, members of the Dakotan congressional delegations, Senator from Alaska, other Members of Congress, members of my Cabinet, members of the administration, members of the United States Armed Forces, distinguished guests: Welcome to the White House.

The Medal of Honor is the highest award for valor a President can bestow. And I'm honored recipients of the Medal of Honor have joined us. Thank you for coming.

* White House correction.